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ABSTRACT

The criteria for excellence in reading presented in this paper are intended to be used by local school districts, and it is their prerogative to determine how to achieve the criteria based on local conditions, needs, capabilities, and desires. The contents include: "The Learner," which suggests that the learner should be guided to read widely and independently for his own purposes, instruction should be learner-centered, and the school should establish some means to aid parents in their roles in developing communication skills and enjoyment in learning in their children; "Staff," which discusses the role the educational staff should play in developing an excellent reading program; "Community," which discusses parent involvement, community resources, adult basic education programs, and the role of the school; "Instruction," which presents guidelines necessary for a successful reading program; "Materials," which looks at the function of materials in a total reading program; "Environment," which discusses the physical and psychological setting to which the learner is exposed during the school day; "Time," which presents suggestions for the allocation of reading time; "Evaluation," which presents guidelines for the use of evaluation; and "Budget." (WR)

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CRITERIA FOR EXCELLENCE IN READING

Right to Read

Pennsylvania

1974

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INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of these criteria to help honest and educationally talented persons, whatever their position in a district, to break the blockade to relevant educational change. The focus should be centered on substance (does it work) rather than form (does it look good).

Conditions vary from district to district and from building to building within each district; nevertheless, these criteria may be considered applicable to all schools within the commonwealth. It is the prerogative of each district and/or building to determine how to achieve the criteria based on local conditions, needs, capabilities and desires.

These criteria for excellence in reading have been based on the successes and failures of the past in order to establish guidelines for the present. The intent is to refresh our efforts and stimulate a new excitement and a sense of purpose in reading. Only the involvement and the dedication of each individual to these goals will determine the degree of success.

THE LEARNER

1. The school should establish some means to aid parents in their roles in developing communication skills and enjoyment in learning in their children, from infancy.

2. Instruction should be learner-centered and each learner guided through a planned arrangement of skills to read at his diagnosed expectancy level.

3. The learner should be an active participant in determining his own goals, planning his program, and charting his progress.

4. The learner should be encouraged to use his interests and experiences as an integral part of reading.

5. The learner should be guided to read widely and independently for his own purposes.

STAFF

1. The administrator should recognize reading as a priority in the school program and enthusiastically provide functional and moral support regarding staff, time, facilities, budget, and community relations to maintain this priority.

2. A major responsibility of the building principal is to generate a warm personal atmosphere, setting the tone for the entire building.

3. In every district a certified director should provide supervision, coordination, in-service training, and consultant services.

   This program should have the authority, freedom, and administrative support to maintain and implement a total reading program, thus becoming the liason between administration and classroom teachers.

   The director should involve the total staff when planning the reading program.

4. The teacher should assume the responsibility of creating an atmosphere conducive to the learning process and promoting lifelong reading habits.

   In order to do this the teacher must demonstrate professional competency in the knowledge of the reading process and meet the learner's needs through an on-going diagnosis. The teacher must personally value reading, be creative and flexible, and be willing to grow professionally.

5. A good program should utilize the supportive services of the following: community resource people, social agencies, librarians, speech therapist, hearing therapist, school physician, school nurse, school psychologist, home and school visitor, learning disability specialist, guidance counselor, consultants, and other staff members.

6. Para-professionals should enhance the reading program by working in the classroom with the teacher and outside the classroom in preparation of instructional materials as required by the teacher, as their personalities, experiences, talents and training allow.

7. Student and adult volunteers can contribute additional special talent and time to the reading program through tutorial, clerical, and general assistance.

8. Volunteers can be recruited from the ranks of the student body, service organizations, parents, retired persons, and local college students. Provisions should be made for orientation and periodic training of all volunteers.

8. Staff will include maintenance and secretarial services which should contribute to a positive learning atmosphere.

COMMUNITY

1. Enthusiastic support by the Board of Education is of paramount importance to the success of the district-wide reading program.

2. The school should involve the various segments of the community in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the reading program.

3. Parents may become involved through participation in parent-teacher organizations, in the classroom as volunteer teacher aides, and by nurturing at home the learning which has been initiated in school.

4. Reading instruction should be offered as a vital part of a community Adult Basic Education program. This program should meet the needs of functional illiterates, school dropouts, non-English-speaking persons, and those seeking to improve reading-learning efficiency and/or to enhance personal reading enjoyment.

5. A wide variety of community resources are available and should be used creatively to bring enrichment and relevance to the school experience.

INSTRUCTION

There are many ways to teach reading. However, certain guidelines are necessary for a successful reading program.

1. The program should employ any one or a combination of approaches to the teaching of basic reading skills applicable to the total curriculum as determined by the needs of the individual.

2. Flexibility should exist among and within the approaches according to teacher effectiveness in meeting individual needs.

3. Program continuity should be achieved through progressive record keeping of the necessary reading skills.

4. Reading skills should permeate all areas of the curriculum.

5. The total program should engender a reading habit which will lead to a productive and fulfilled life for the learner.

6. Any special program fulfilling the needs of the atypical child should be coordinated closely with existing classroom instruction.

MATERIALS

1. The teacher should be encouraged to use a wide variety of commercial and non-commercial materials (basals, kits, newspapers, cookbooks, manuals, etc.) and equipment to meet the needs of the individual.

2. The teacher should be encouraged to develop materials to meet specific needs of the learner.

3. The library instructional materials center, and/or resource room should be an integral part of the total reading program.

ENVIRONMENT

Environment as defined here is the physical and psychological setting to which the learner is exposed during the time limits of the school day.

1. The school district should provide adequate classroom physical facilities: space for large and small group instruction, individual study areas, adequate lighting, movable and multi-purpose furniture.

2. The instructional materials center and/or resource room should be centrally located and provide a wide variety of media and materials to meet the curricular and recreational reading needs of all students.

3. All facilities should be easily accessible, informal, attractive, and inviting.

4. The classroom should reflect a healthy blend of organization and freedom.

5. Each school and classroom should project a warm personal atmosphere to promote a psychologically sound learning situation.

6. The school should provide the learner with the opportunity to experience the world outside the school setting and to relate those experiences to the printed page.

TIME

1. Although a daily uninterrupted period of time for reading instruction may be established, the applicable reading skills should be taught concurrently with content area instruction.

2. Teachers should be provided sufficient time free of students to evaluate continuously the needs and progress of each pupil and to formulate plans based on those findings.

3. Adequate time should be allotted on a regular basis for free reading.

EVALUATION

1. Evaluation of the total reading program should be an on-going process and serve as a means of constant improvement.

2. In addition to the commonly used norm referenced measures which have their limitations, student evaluation procedures should include a system of criterion referenced testing in order to determine mastery of a sequential arrangement of skills.

3. In addition to administrative evaluation, each teacher should develop continuous systematic self-evaluation procedures to direct and improve teaching performance.

BUDGET

Since reading is a priority the reading program should determine the budget.